

Israel proposes Palestinian currency model

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat has put forward the model of the Scottish pound for a symbolic Palestinian currency in the occupied territories during the five-year interim period of autonomy. "We don't think the currency must be the shekel or the dollar." Scottish banks issue their own pound notes with the same value as the pound sterling, but the Bank of England is the controlling authority. Mr. Shohat leads the Israeli delegation in talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Paris on economic aspects of the implementation of the Sept. 19 autonomy deal. Israeli sources in Paris have predicted an economic agreement as early as next week while talks on security issues have hit the rocks and are only due to resume Monday after lengthy bickering. "The atmosphere is good," Mr. Shohat said of the Paris sessions.

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Jordan and PLO sign economic agreement

3 days of talks produce framework for Jordanian-Palestinian ties

By Wafa Amr

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — After three days of arduous deliberations, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Friday signed an economic cooperation agreement setting forth relations between the Kingdom and the "liberated Palestinian territories" during a five-year interim period.

The economic agreement, a compromise between basic Jordanian and Palestinian positions, comprises a broad framework for cooperation in the fields of banking and money, trade, labour force, investment, tourism, customs and tariffs, as well as security and border issues and refugees.

This agreement has been the culmination of strenuous and long efforts that we both engaged "seriously in," Dr. Javad Anani, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of Information, said. "I can say it is a very good agreement, which is the start of a new phase of continued and practical cooperation and coordination."

Dr. Anani, addressing a press conference, focused on the practicality of the accord and the difficult task it took both sides to actually arrive at

signing it after a long delay. The original pact was jointly drafted last September. It was amended in October. But PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's justification for delaying ratification of the draft agreement was that he could not commit himself to any agreements before he was assured of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and before the Palestinian authority was established in the "liberated Palestinian territories."

The takeoff point for the week's negotiations which led to the economic accord was the PLO's agreement to put off the issue of confederation until Palestinians living in the occupied territories regain their right to self-determination and free choice.

Dr. Saeed Al Tal, deputy prime minister, minister of higher education and head of the Jordanian delegation to the economic talks with the PLO, signed the economic agreement with the head of the Palestinian delegation, Farouk Kaddoumi, at the Foreign Ministry Friday noon. Arguments on the wording continued until the last minutes before signing.

"It took both sides a lot of effort and long hours before reaching this agreement which reflects no contradictory wishes but unified aspirations that reflect the linkage and unified interests of people East and West of the River Jordan.



Deputy Prime Minister Saeed Al Tal (right) Friday shakes hands with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Political Department Chief Foreign Minister (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

dan."

Both Dr. Anani and Mr. Nashashibi said the agreement between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the PLO organises economic relations between Palestine and Jordan, with priorities focused on facilitating and reopening of branches of the Jordanian banks in the occupied territories, monitoring financial and monetary policies for which a joint technical committee would be set up. They also said they have agreed on continuous and in-

tensive coordination and activating the joint committees which would be dealing with pressing issues stated in the agreement as priorities.

Mr. Nashashibi stressed that agreement had been reached on close and intensive coordination in pushing the peace process forward in a way that would safeguard the interests of the two countries, especially the implementation of Palestinians' rights to return, to self-determination, and to setting up an independent Palestinian

state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Dr. Anani said the accord meets the aspirations of both peoples and their expected challenges. It also takes into consideration factors of implementability and execution on the ground, he said.

The time spent on deliberations during the past three days has given both sides ample time to discuss issues in detail which created joint understanding for the nature of developments and to enable us to

Both sides voice satisfaction and pledge closer coordination

include ideas that could be implemented rather than words that cannot be translated into action," he said.

Dr. Anani said it was of utmost importance for both sides to reach this economic agreement at this period of time because of "tremendous pressures exerted on Jordan, and many attempts that aim at driving a wedge and ending the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship, which would lead us, God forbid, to different and separate ways which would not help either of us to reach our objectives."

King Hussein had issued a "last chance" warning to the PLO to coordinate with Jordan before it was too late to save the comprehensiveness of the Middle East peace negotiations or attempts to isolate the PLO from the rest of the Arabs.

"We have insisted on changing some articles in the original draft. We ended up with minor changes and slight modification in the wording," said one PLO official. He said some of the original draft's articles were removed completely since they were not considered priorities that have to be dealt with during the interim period.

Dr. Anani said that banking

(Continued on page 5)

Britain not seeking to destabilise Libya

VALETTA (AFP) — Britain is only trying to ensure the fair trial of the Lockerbie bombers and is not seeking to remove the Libyan government, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said here Friday. "We are not involved in seeking to destabilise or change the government of Libya," Mr. Hurd told journalists after meeting with Maltese leaders. "We believe there should be a fair trial." Mr. Hurd currently on his way back to London after a visit to the Middle East (see page 3), also warned that the Middle East must avoid a "sterile period" in the peace process because "time is not on the side of peace." He added the unrest in the Gaza Strip was not going to last forever and that negotiators must persist in their talks.

Top Libyan official visits Tunisia

TUNIS (R) — Major Kholiddi Hamdi, a member of Libya's five-man leadership headed by Muammar Qaddafi, is in Tunisia for talks. The Libyan embassy said Friday. Tunisian and Libya are members of the Arab Maghrib Union (AMU), along with Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. An AMU summit under Tunisia's presidency, planned for the end of 1993, was postponed partly because of Libya's dispute with the West over the 1988 bombing of a U.S. jet over Lockerbie, Scotland. Tunisia is trying to stage the summit around the end of this month.

Iranian dissident shot dead in Turkey

ANKARA (R) — An Iranian Kurdish dissident has been shot dead in Turkey where he was registered by the United Nations as a refugee, police said on Friday. Taher Kirmenchi was killed with a shot from a pistol on Tuesday, a security official in the central Anatolian city of Corum said. Police said several people, including Iranian nationals, had been detained in connection with the killing. The Turkish Daily News said Kirmenchi had been a leader of a faction of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). Two other members of the faction were killed in Turkey last year.

Israel frees 101 Palestinians in 'goodwill' gesture for peace

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel released 101 Palestinian prisoners on Friday in a goodwill gesture on the eve of the resumption of autonomy negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the army announced.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal described the move as symbolic, claiming all those freed had only a few days left to serve and supported the peace process.

But Palestinian sources said of the 47 Gazans who were let out, four had been held since six and 19 months of their sentences remaining, 18 had from one to six months and 25 just a few days.

No breakdown was immediately available for 54 prisoners from the West Bank, but their Gaza colleagues said some also had many months left to serve.

After a week of bickering, the PLO and Israel agreed Thursday to resume talks in the Egyptian Red Sea resort on

Sunday or Monday to try to implement autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Mr. Shahal said no decision had been taken on further releases among the 11,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails.

"Everything will depend on the discussions which will cover this area," Mr. Shahal told Israel Radio.

Lists have been drawn up detailing age, health and sentence and prisoners would be released accordingly when the government gave the green light, Mr. Shahal added.

The army said that those released Friday belonged to the PLO's mainstream Fatah organisation led by Yasser Arafat. It said that only those "without blood on their hands" were being let go.

All had been convicted in military courts before the Sept. 13 signing of the Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

No members of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad

were among those released, nor were followers of leftist groups within the PLO that are fighting the autonomy plan.

Freedom for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons has been a key demand of the PLO from the start of negotiations.

The army said before Friday's release 4,958 Palestinians are held in military prisons and another 3,200 are held in other jails. The Mandala Institute, a human rights group based in the West Bank town of Ramallah, estimates, however, that Israel holds 11,700 Palestinians.

The prisoner issue is only one of a myriad of problems worrying negotiators trying to bridge gaps in the Gaza-Jericho plan.

Under the agreement, an Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho was to begin on Dec. 13 but it has already been delayed.

The main issues dividing the sides are the size of Jericho, control of border crossings, and security arrangements.

Syria hails Geneva summit

DAMASCUS (AP) — A government-run newspaper said Friday that President Hafez Al Assad's Jan. 16 summit with President Bill Clinton is "the most important event in our world today."

The Al Thawra daily said in an editorial that the Geneva summit is proof of Washington's recognition that Syrian cooperation is indispensable to achieving in the Middle East.

The mere idea of holding the summit under current international circumstances of Syria's role in the Middle East, the newspaper said.

The commentary also indicated the importance the Syrians attach to Mr. Assad's meeting with Mr. Clinton.

It will be only the third the Turkish leader has had with U.S. presidents since he came to power in a 1970 coup and pursued a policy that put him at odds with the West.

Palestinian shot dead after 'suicide attack'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Police shot and killed a Palestinian Thursday after he stabbed a soldier in a Jewish neighbourhood.

Ilan Gabai was in moderate condition with stab wounds in the neck and the chest.

A leaflet found on the body of the assailant, a resident of the occupied Gaza Strip, said the Islamic Jihad in Palestine organisation was responsible for the attack.

The hand-written leaflet opened with a verse from the Holy Koran, and said the suicide operation was to affirm that the holy war against the Jews will continue until the last Zionist is slaughtered.

Police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said the Palestinian grabbed the gun of the wounded soldier from one of the paramilitary border units. The assailant, a student from the West Bank university Bir Zeit, tried to flee, shooting once, but other soldiers gave chase and shot him near a hilltop in

the adjacent Arab suburb of Shuafat.

Mr. Ben-Ruby identified the Palestinian as Ahmad Abdul Wahab, and said the stolen gun was found on his body. He did not have a permit to enter Israel from the West Bank.

Mr. Ben-Ruby confirmed that the man belonged to the Islamic Jihad, and had intended a suicide attack.

The group contains some of the most hardcore opponents to the peace process.

"I am sure that more and more people on both sides will understand that the sooner the violence is stopped the better," said Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

The stabbing took place at a busy intersection in French hill, a Jewish neighbourhood abutting the main road to the city's northern Arab suburbs.

Police arrested 10 Jewish settlers on the West Bank overnight after a roadblock protest which led to scuffles with soldiers, military officials said Friday.

The brief statement gave no details about the outcome of the meetings, intended to form a basis for subsequent talks.

Mr. Moi said he was "personally pleased with the outcome of the meeting" and was "especially happy that the Khartoum government was represented."



Mousa Abdul Ghani (left), a Palestinian prisoner released Friday, is embraced by his brother in the Gaza Strip (AFP photo)

Moi says Sudan talks going well

NAIROBI (AFP) — Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi said Friday that preliminary Sudanese peace talks held here had gone well following meetings among Khartoum government negotiators, rebel leaders and four African foreign ministers.

The talks were hosted by Mr. Moi as chairman of a six-member regional group, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD).

This week the foreign ministers of Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda, the four IGADD members chosen by the organisation to broker peace in Sudan, met the leaders of two rival factions of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), John Garang and Riek Machar.

They also met a Khartoum government delegation led by Abdalla Deng. Mr. Moi said in a statement reported by the Kenya News Agency.

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The Executive Committee, meeting since Sunday under

PLO urges dissident factions to end rift

TUNIS (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership on Friday urged all Palestinian factions to bury the hatchet and start a broad dialogue ahead of autonomy in the Israeli-occupied territories.

The PLO Executive Committee said factions in the occupied territories and abroad should rally around a "common denominator" as their "first national authority in modern history" was becoming a reality.

In a statement published by the Palestinian news agency WAFA, it said they could work to recover completely their "inalienable rights of return, self-determination and an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital."

"Join hands to build our national entity... and let love guide our behaviour and our relations," the Executive Committee said.

But 10 hardline Palestinian groups, including several PLO factions, on Wednesday announced a united leadership in Damascus to defeat the September autonomy accord and also agreed to boycott elections after self-rule begins.

The Executive Committee, meeting since Sunday under

Iraqi official in Turkey for oil talks

ANKARA (R) — A senior Iraqi official arrived in Turkey Friday for political talks on a Turkish-Iraqi oil pipeline closed since the Gulf crisis in 1990, the Anatolia news agency said. Iraqi Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Riyadh Al Qasim said at Ankara airport that he was ready to discuss any topic Turkish officials would bring up. Turkish officials say the talks will mainly deal with the matter of emptying the twin oil pipelines from Iraq's Kirkuk oilfields to Turkey's Mediterranean terminal at Yumurtalik. In line with a U.N. embargo on Iraq, Turkey shut the pipelines soon after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in August 1990. It wants to draw an estimated 9.2 million barrels of oil trapped inside the pipes to prevent corrosion. The pipelines must be flushed and refilled for correct maintenance until regular flow is resumed, Turks say. Around 5.7 million barrels of oil belongs to Iraq and the rest is owed to Turkey. Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin has said the U.N. Security Council would decide on the disposition of Iraq's share. Ankara urges Iraq to comply with U.N. demands to scrap its weapons of mass destruction so that the oil and trade embargo on Baghdad can be lifted.

Observers said Jordan obviously compromised on the issue of banking in return for the PLO's signature. PLO officials said minor amendments were made to the original draft which appeased the PLO's desire for recognition. The PLO's main objection to the Jordanian-Israeli memorandum of understanding concerning the reopening of Jordanian bank branches in the West Bank was that the banking agreement neglected the Palestinian authority in the occupied territories and bypassed the PLO as the political authority there, according to PLO officials. This economic pact, they said, recognised the Palestinian authority in the territories and it became a partner to the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) in reopening bank branches in the West Bank.

"We have insisted on changing some articles in the original draft. We ended up with minor changes and slight modification in the wording," said one PLO official. He said some of the original draft's articles were removed completely since they were not considered priorities that have to be dealt with during the interim period.

Dr. Anani said that during the interim period of the peace agreement, the two sides "comforts many people in Jordan and in Palestine who were anxiously awaiting such a step to allay their concerns over current and future relations between Jordan and the Palestinians."

Dr. Anani and Mr. Nashashibi said the economic accord differs little from the previous draft reached last October.

France gets tough with NATO over Yugoslavia

PARIS (Agencies) — France spearheaded a drive on Friday to get next week's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit to agree on tough new measures to halt the Bosnian war as the Western powers involved in peacekeeping efforts wondered how much longer they can continue.

The 16 NATO nations must be prepared "to help the U.N. implement its resolutions by sending in further troops and ensuring real protection in the safe areas," Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said in a radio interview.

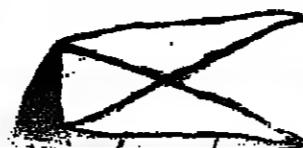
The question of former Yugoslavia was originally not on the agenda of the summit next Monday and Tuesday, but was added at French insistence.

"We must get NATO and the United States to recognise the validity of the European position on former Yugoslavia," a senior French official said Friday amid fears the summit would skate over the issue.

The PLO executive body confirmed its "attachment to the principle of democratic dialogue, political pluralism, freedom of thought and the practice of democracy."

The pro-democracy lobby, headed by Haidar Abdul Shafi, said Thursday it had failed to curb Mr. Arafat's "monopoly" on decision-making in the peace negotiations with Israel, blaming Executive Committee members for showing no interest in making joint decisions.

Mr. Kinkel will host a Bonn summit starting on Saturday between Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, Bos



British secretary hopes for realistic peace agreements in 1994

Hurd pledges to seek to address Jordan's economic concerns

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd ended a visit to Jordan Thursday saying he was optimistic that "realistic agreements" between Israel and the Arabs could be signed during this year.

Addressing a press conference shortly before his departure, Mr. Hurd said Jordan was not near to signing a peace agreement with Israel and faced a lot of work before an accord could be drawn up.

Mr. Hurd, who held talks with His Majesty King Hussein, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and other ministers, said the British government appreciated the economic problems faced by Jordan and would explore means to help address the Kingdom's concerns.

Specifically, he referred to British help for water development projects in south Jordan and said the assistance was reviewed during a meeting he held with Minister of Water and Irrigation Hisham Al Khathir earlier Thursday.

There is a "continuous dialogue and relationship between Jordan and Britain perhaps closer than any other Arab countries."

Mr. Hurd said Britain stood ready to help Jordan alleviate its foreign debt burden as well as supply equipment to the Kingdom's Armed Forces. He did not elaborate.

The foreign secretary said he also appreciated Jordan's grievances over the overzealous enforcement of the sanctions against Iraq, causing serious repercussions on the Jordanian economy.

"There are certain very specific practical problems on shipping that were explained to me," he said, referring to the costly delays and higher freight charges that Jordanian importers are facing as a result of the inspection procedures adopted by the enforcers of the sanctions patrolling the Red Sea.

"We are strongly in favour of the correct and strict implementation of the sanctions, but it needs to be regular, reasonable and not simply bureaucratic," Mr. Hurd said. The reference included Jordan's complaints that applications for U.N. approval for the export of sanctions-exempted Jordan-

sian products to Iraq were being held up while Turkey and Iran, Iraq's two other neighbours, did not face such problems.

"There are examples where the Jordanians feel that the process is not reasonable and it is simply bureaucratic," Mr. Hurd said. "These are things that we can pursue."

"...The British government believes in strict implementation of the sanctions, but reasonable implementation of the (Security Council) resolutions which exist," he added.

Mr. Hurd said that he also raised the issue of a Jordanian ban on imports of British meat products imposed after reports of the "crazy cow disease" in Britain. He argued that all Britain's other major trading partners had accepted that the problem was resolved and that British exports were "safe," but "there is still a problem" in Jordan. He expressed hope that the issue would be resolved soon.

Mr. Hurd, who arrived here Wednesday after talks in Lebanon and Israel, following an earlier visit to Syria, said there could be no reversal of the Middle East peace process and that there was a will on all tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations to go forward.

"Both Britain and Jordan are looking forward to the completion of the peace process," he said. "No one pretends that it is going to be easy..."

Mr. Hurd described as "understandable" Israel's justification for continuing to occupy parts of South Lebanon on "security grounds," and said: "As I understand it, Israel is ready to withdraw. Israel has no wish to add to her territory by taking in Lebanese villages or Lebanese countryside."

"I believe that, as a result of my discussions in Beirut and with the Israelis, it should be possible to reach an agreement on (the Lebanese-Israeli track), that will pave the way for the full implementation of the Taif agreement for the full recovery of Lebanon of territorial independence."

Mr. Hurd was referring to an inter-Lebanese accord reached in 1989 under Arafat's League and Saudi mediation in the Saudi resort town of Taif, providing for the departure of all foreign forces, including the Syrians and Israelis, from Lebanon's territory, in stages, leading up to the full exercise of Beirut's sovereignty over all of Lebanon.

ments, he said.

"We can help by making available our skills," he said, and referred to a British pledge of \$100 million to help the Palestinians develop their building infrastructure. The aid is outside the British contribution to about \$600 million pledged by the European Union (EU).

Answering a question from a British reporter whether there were "major obstacles" holding up a Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement, Mr. Hurd said:

"On the Jordan-Israeli track, obviously there is still work to be done. Much has been achieved... so there is not yet a paper to be signed. His Majesty the King explained to me that he is anxious to do the work before the signature and not to sign before the work."

"I understand the reasons for that. That is his policy and I respect that."

Mr. Hurd described his visit to Jordan as aimed at getting "some perceptions, some ideas (and) some impressions from here which I cannot get from elsewhere (because of an) informality borne out of long friendship."

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He also pointed out that the government was coordinating efforts with the Palestinians to reach the aspired settlement.

In reviewing the consequences of the 1967 war, Dr. Anani said that the Kingdom

shouldered heavy burdens and spent no less than \$16 billion as a result of the displacement of the Palestinians and their flooding of the east bank of the Jordan River.

The two German parliamentarians Thursday met with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lower House of Parliament and discussed the Middle East and Palestine.

After hearing the committee chairman's views, the German parliamentarians urged Jordan to pursue the peace process and said peace was bound to benefit all peoples of the region.

In discussing democracy, they said Jordan has an example in democracy by its free parliamentary elections.

Committee Chairman Abdul Hadi Al Majali voiced Jordan's

appreciation of Germany's continued economic and technical assistance to the Kingdom.

The parliamentarians held a meeting with Planning Minister Ziyad Fariz who outlined his ministry's role in socio-economic development of Jordan since the 1950s.

Noting that German assistance to Jordan was contributing to the country's development, the minister said the Jordanian economy was a free market economy that encourages foreign investments.

Mr. Kittelman said that he would call for continued supply of economic and political aid to Jordan by various world countries, especially the European Community to help Jordan continue its peace efforts and to enable the Kingdom to meet the challenge.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Farhan reelected IAF secretary general

AMMAN (I.T.) — The Islamic Action Front's (IAF) executive office Thursday selected Ishaq Al Farhan as its secretary-general, and Dr. Abdil Latif Arabyat as deputy secretary-general. The office also selected Mohammad Oweidah and Ahmad Tanash as administrative and financial assistants respectively. The executive office also accepted the resignation of Abdul Rahim Ekour, who was elected in absentia as member of the executive office. The office named Ziad Khalifah, the first alternate member, as Mr. Ekour's replacement.

Special education training course ends

AMMAN (Petra) — A seven-day training course on "developing methods for teaching gifted students" concluded here Thursday. The course included lectures about characteristics of gifted children, modern trends in developing appropriate curricula for gifted children, methods of developing innovative skills and problem-solving techniques, and stimulating questions that help gifted students think critically. Taking part in the course were teachers from the Ministry of Education, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools, the armed forces schools, Salt Pilot Centre and representatives of private schools, in addition to the Jubilee School.

Handicapped children begin winter camp

AMMAN (Petra) — A winter camp for handicapped children will be held in Waqas town in the northern Jordan Valley region as of Saturday. A total of 50 handicapped children from centres in various refugee camps are participating in the camp which is organised by the United Nations Refugees and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Masri heads society for freedom

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Society for Enhancement of Freedoms and Democracy has elected a seven member administrative committee, headed by Speaker of the Lower House Taber Al Masri. The other committee members are Salah Jarrar, Muayad Nihay, Nazik Bitar, Sultan Hattab, Jasser Tadros and Adnan Touba. The society was established in March 1993 to enhance democracy, promote public awareness about the concept of democracy and to work towards ensuring freedoms and human rights. The society's founding members are Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, Taher Masri, Awad Khleifat, Kamal Al Qasim, Adel Abu Khajil, Assad Abdul Rahim, Salah Jarrar, Taleh Al Rifai, Nazik Bitar, Jasser Tadros, Sultan Al Hattab, Adnan Touba and Muayad Nihay.

Jordan reduces illiteracy rate from 22% to 15%

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has succeeded in reducing illiteracy rate of persons above the age of 15 to 15 per cent by the end of 1993, down from 22.5 per cent in 1988, thanks to the intensive adult and literacy education programmes adopted by the Ministry of Education, according to Mr. Ahmad Al Soud, senior Education Ministry official.

In a statement Friday, on the eve of Jordan's observance of the Arab Literacy Day Saturday, Mr. Soud said Jordan was striving to lower the rate of illiteracy to citizens of 15 years, and above to mere eight per cent by the year 2000.

This year, the Kingdom has, 687 literacy and adult education centres providing basic education to 11,580 male and female illiterates noted Mr. Soud.

To prepare for this intensive campaign, the Ministry of Education has trained 600 full-time teachers to shoulder the task of providing basic education to the illiterates of Jordan, he pointed out.

It is due to these strenuous efforts which yielded excellent results that the ministry won the 1993 international award assigned by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) for

the official pointed out that as a result of the efforts to provide education to Jordanians, at least 97 per cent of children of the learning age in Jordan are now registered in one of the schools which run side by side with the literacy centres around the kingdom.

Women seek changes in labour legislation

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) Thursday announced the formation of a follow-up committee to formulate the necessary amendments to the labour law with regard to women's rights.

The final draft will be presented to Parliament for consideration.

The recommendations will tackle the most serious violations of women's rights in the labour law, according to Ms. Halasch, director of women's department at the Ministry of Labour.

During a two-hour lecture at the Phoenix Gallery, Ms. Halasch pointed to the dire need to change the labour law in light of the recent developments and social changes that occurred in the society.

"The number of women joining the labour force is increasing dramatically while legislations and laws have not been amended to reflect these changes," Ms. Halasch said.

"The condition of women at work are still unacceptable due to discriminatory laws and regulations."

Ms. Halasch referred to the inequality between men and women at work, especially in wages, and noted that women were being illegally exploited while given lower salaries than men.

She further explained that in many cases women were being hired for a short training period without payment and they get sacked out of their jobs after that period.

Ms. Halasch listed many gaps in the labour law which were inconsistent with international treaties and conventions. Among these were:

— Article 35 which stipulates that owners of establishments who have more than 30 women at work should accommodate the institution with a suitable nursery room.

Ministries prepare to combat rat raid

AMMAN (I.T.) — The ministries of agriculture, municipal and rural affairs and health have joined forces with the Mafraq Municipality to rid the city and neighbouring regions of the rats that have been causing extensive damage to property.

After repeated public complaints to the local authorities, the public health committee met in Mafraq Thursday and set up a committee, representing the three ministries and the municipality, to carry out a survey of the affected regions and the volume of the problem in preparation for a campaign against the rodents.

At the same time, the local municipalities said they would join hands in working out a plan for combating the rats.

Another report said that a two and a half month old Mafraq girl lost a piece of her right toe when a rat in her house gnawed at it.

Reports have said that the rats had been infesting homes, farms and, especially, garbage sites.

It was due to the fact that the garbage was continually accumulating in certain areas that the rats have been multiplying in great numbers and roaming around homes and streets, said an earlier report in the local press.

Other reports said that the neighbouring refugee camp, east of Irbid, has suffered extensive material losses due to the rats.

In July last year, several concerned government ministries helped Irbid Municipality to rid the Irbid farms and residential districts of large numbers of rats.

Iraqi dinar takes a plunge in Amman

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The embattled Iraqi dinar, still a source of hopes of bumper gains for speculators despite setbacks last year, took another plunge this week in Jordan after signs of an early lifting of international sanctions against Iraq.

The Iraqi dinar was worth eight fils in the local markets on Thursday, down from 10 fils weeks ago, when Iraq accepted long-term monitoring of its arms development programmes as part of the ceasefire resolutions that ended the 1991 war over Kuwait.

Investors hoped that the Iraqi acceptance of the key provision in the ceasefire terms would lead to a partial lifting of the sanctions, but as it turned out, it could be another four to eight months before the U.N. Security Council would seriously consider any relaxation of the sweeping embargo.

In a regular two-month review of the sanctions, the Security Council made no move in December to relax the sweeping embargo, which has choked off Iraqi oil exports — Baghdad's mainstay income.

Iraqi imports of food and medicine are the only exemption from the sanctions, in place since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

In Baghdad, the currency, whose official value remains at \$3.1, was traded at 145 dinars to the American dollar, reports said Friday.

It indicated that government move to relax foreign exchange controls and allowing

Iraqis to operate bank accounts in foreign currency have done little to restore public confidence in the Iraqi economy.

Furthermore, Iraqis say, they are also apprehensive that they might lose their foreign currency holdings altogether if the government moved in a swoop to seize all bank accounts in foreign currency whenever it found fit to do so.

In Amman, the volume of trading in the dinar declined dramatically since May last year, when the Iraqi government withdrew from circulation part of its pre-war currency. But, dealers said, enough interest remained among speculators to invest in the Iraqi dinar.

Surprisingly, even the withdrawn notes continue to be traded. The so-called "Swiss" dinars were replaced by new locally printed currency in May 1993, dealing a severe blow to thousands of Jordanians who were hoping to reap huge returns as and when the sanctions were lifted.

It is estimated that Jordanians, including those who had accepted payment in the "Swiss" dinars from the Iraqi government in payment for goods and services under special permissions issued by the Central Bank of Iraq, lost up to \$100 million in the fiasco.

Jordanian government efforts to secure Iraqi compensation for businessmen who had accepted the currency in good faith did not make much headway except Iraq promises that the issue would be studi-

ed.

The high tax has ensured that only businessmen and rich Iraqis with access to dollars leave the country, Iraqis said.

The flow of Iraqi currency to

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Art exhibition by Sudanese artist Abdal Qadir Al Bekhit at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Sadik Kwaish entitled "Talisma" at Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artist Suha Mash'al at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by Iraqi artist Abdul Jabbar Salman on bedouin culture at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition on the 100th anniversary of the death of French novelist Guy De Maupassant at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of Iraqi books at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by a number of Jordanian artists entitled "The Sixth Exhibition — Samples From The Contemporary Jordanian Art '93" at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition "Prints and Drawings of Fakhrinissa Zeid" 1915-1991 until the 15th of January '94 at Darat al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation. Also showing the "Permanent" Exhibition. (Tel. 643251/2).
- ★ Drama for children entitled "The Question" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

LECTURE

- ★ Lecture in Arabic entitled "The Sociology of the International Community" by Dr. Abdelsaid Abu Haitham at the Goethe-Institut at 7:00 p.m.



MILITARY VISIT: His Majesty King Hussein Thursday attended a celebration marking the 43rd anniversary of the First Royal Armoured Battalion and inspected display of documentary pictures relating the development of the battalion and lists of martyrs. In a brief speech to the officers and troops, the King congratulated them on the anniversary, urged them to acquire training and be ready to defend the homeland in the face of any danger. King Hussein said he took pride in his armed forces, the shield of the nation. He said that the anniversary should serve as a day of remembrance of the martyrs who fell in defence of their homeland.



Information Minister Jawad Al Anani (left) meeting with the German

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Jordanian Perspective

Small steps on a long way ahead

THE so-called ultimatum (that's how the Western media described it) that His Majesty King Hussein served last week on Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat to come clear with Jordan and revive coordination or go separate ways is seen by many in the Arab World and elsewhere as pressure on Mr. Arafat and a Jordanian tactic. Unfortunately those who see the King's pointed comments from that perspective are short-sighted simply because they fail to grasp that the Jordanian stand did not come out of a vacuum.

For them, the King's repeated references to Jordan's commitment to respecting the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the assistance that Jordan extended to enable the Palestinians to participate in the 26-month-old Arab-Israeli peace process meant a complaint that Jordan was being sidelined in the Israel-PLO negotiations or implementing the groundbreaking autonomy agreement signed on Sept. 13.

It is naive for anyone to think that Jordan could be sidelined or turned into a player who reacts to events rather than initiating them. Jordan did not live through the tragedies of the Arab World, particularly those which befall the Palestinian people, to be told, indirectly or directly, to take a back seat until such time other players are ready to deal.

Quite simply, Jordan cannot afford to do and will not do so regardless of the limitations imposed on it. We have our national concerns as an independent sovereign state and we will not let those concerns be under the mercy of anyone. What we would like to have is a clear position based on a genuine desire for Arab coordination which will protect Arab interests in the context of the conflict with Israel without compromising or jeopardising Jordan's national interests, which do not threaten anyone else's or come at the expense of another.

The King's clear call on the PLO to drop all references to a future Jordanian-Palestinian confederation until such time as the Palestinians could exercise their legitimate territorial and political rights stemmed from a constant reminder of the fact that many independence-seeking Palestinians were slowly losing confidence in the peace process because they see a confederation dominated by Jordan as the end result.

Preoccupation with the problems of the past, mainly the fallout of the Palestinian problem, has been plaguing Jordan's political life for a long time. And it is unthinkable now we continue to pay the price for future shapes and eventualities based on assumptions that harm the entire process of bringing about security and stability that we all long for.

For us in Jordan, having had to share a major part of the suffering along with the Palestinians, the strong comments the King made last week are very clear: Unless the PLO came forth with clearly defined political and economic options and worked out an unambiguous and transparent agreement on political and economic coordination with Jordan, the people

on the both sides of the River Jordan stood to suffer while Israel reaped the benefits of the disarray in our ranks.

If someone would like to interpret it as putting pressure on Mr. Arafat at a time when he is grappling with the task of extracting concessions from Israel in the self-rule negotiations, then let it be so.

It should be understood that the PLO has acquired not only the status of the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people but also the responsibilities that go with it. One cannot have a half-measure of a representative status without baving to shoulder the obligations and responsibilities that go with it. Having to deal with the Jordanian position, stated publicly after having put up with procrastination and reticence, is part of that responsibility.

The sympathy that we may feel for Mr. Arafat in his predicament with the Israelis does not necessarily mean that we wait patiently until such time he is fully convinced that he could not get anything more out of Israel during the interim period.

A simple example in this context is the PLO's quest for an independent Palestinian monetary authority in the occupied territories. For all practical purposes, it could have secured Israeli approval for such an authority had it not been the attached demand that the authority be also empowered to issue a Palestinian currency. In the end, Israel ruled out both.

In the same vein, many of the so-called experts on the Middle East conflict tend to describe the reopening of Jordanian commercial banks in the occupied territories as the main objective of the Jordanians strategy. Again, the question that they do not care to answer is: Can it be as simple as that? Can just the reopening of the banks mean a total and satisfactory answer to the concerns that Jordan has, including the human dimension of the conflict?

Whether anyone likes it or not, Jordan has genuine concerns over the course of the political and economic developments taking place in the context of the Israel-PLO negotiations on implementing self-rule. The Kingdom simply cannot wait round the corner after the PLO and Israel thrash out an agreement and then engage the PLO in accords that would inevitably have to be based on whatever Israel is willing to grant the Palestinians in the first place during the interim period.

Inasmuch as we in Jordan anxious to ensure that the Palestinians regain their territorial and political rights and that the autonomy accord succeeds in reaching the half-way point before "final status" negotiations start, the fact remains that it was the PLO which worked out the Oslo accord despite all its ambiguities and contradictions and, as such, it cannot blame anyone else or let anyone else pay the price for its shortcomings.

At the same time, it does mean either that Jordan would like to sit back and await the results of the scenarios being played out between Israel and the PLO. The most disturbing element

in the equation is that the PLO has not been exercising its option of strengthening its own hand by coordinating closer with the Arabs, particularly Jordan itself.

But then coordination for coordination sake is not what Jordan is looking for. There are real issues at stake here and it is high time the PLO leadership took a closer look at recent Jordanian moves and undertakings in the regional and international scene to realise that its best bet lies in coming forth with clarity and transparency in its dealing with the Kingdom.

However, the lingering suspicion (or at least that is how some describe it) that Jordan continues to harbour territorial and political ambitions in the West Bank despite its severance of administrative and legal ties in 1988 seems to bold back the PLO leadership. How much of it is actual concern and how much of it is a smokescreen to hide behind is left to anyone's guess.

However, it is against this backdrop that King Hussein repeatedly states that Jordan does not have any such designs and clearly affirmed that the Kingdom's position on Jerusalem stems from religious considerations rather than a quest to stake a territorial claim to the Holy City. The approach is more significant and urgent when seen against the fact that the Israel-PLO agreement puts off the question of Jerusalem until the "final status" negotiations. What guarantees does anyone have against Israeli consolidation of its grip on the Holy City and fair accomplishment during the interim period?

If the PLO has the answer to that, among other major questions, then it should make it clear to Jordan with a view to assessing the probabilities and chances of addressing the concerns that not only Jordan but also the rest of the Muslim World have on the future of the Holy City. That is where genuine coordination begins.

Jordan is seeking a new era in relations with the Palestinians, as represented by the PLO, in a very clear framework which leaves no room for any ambiguity or suspicions. And if the PLO knows what it is doing, then it should realise and appreciate the frank and sincere positions of Jordan and come forward and join hands in the same spirit and objective to serving the future of the people from both sides of the river.

Signing agreements and loud proclamations of clarity and vision are simply not enough; they should be accompanied by sincerity and the vision of joint moves that protect the interests of both and preempt Israeli exploitation of Arab differences.

Judging from the public and private comments from both sides after the latest round of talks in Amman following the so-called ultimatum, the first steps were taken towards the better relationship. But then these first steps have to be followed through with a genuine understanding of the pitfalls that await both if these steps were taken as an end in themselves rather than the beginning of a process which should lead to positive results for both.

Sigh of relief

THE MINISTER of Information, Dr. Jawad Nabi, put it appropriately yesterday, after the signing of the Jordanian-PLO economic agreement, when he said that the accord would be a starting point for the two peoples in Jordan and Palestine. Indeed the seemingly tense atmosphere that characterised the otherwise warm relations between the leaderships of Jordan and Palestine was disturbing for people on both sides of the Jordan River.

A majority of Jordanians and Palestinians supported the start of the peace talks in Madrid in 1991. They saw in Jordan providing an umbrella for the Palestinian side a good omen and a strong indication at the depth of ties between the two peoples. Then, and thanks to the persistence of Palestinian negotiators and a shift of the Jordanian team led by Dr. Abdellah Majali, it was possible for the Palestinians to wrest from the Israelis recognition of their status as an independent state.

Then the Palestinians and the Israelis arrived with their declaration of principles in secret talks in Oslo. That took Jordanians and everybody by surprise. Yet Jordan chose, after absorbing the shock, to declare its full support for the agreement and for the Palestinian negotiators. And one day after the historic accord was signed between PLO and Israel in Washington on Sept. 13, Jordan went ahead and signed its own agenda for the peace talks as was otherwise ready long before but acting for progress on the Palestinian track. Unfortunately, the Palestinian brothers were submerged in their bargaining with the Israelis that they relegated their coordination with the Jordanians. Jordan, of course, would have protested had it not been to the fact that every aspect of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis would, one way or the other, affect Jordan. Hence, His Majesty King Hussein's warning last week: Coordinate or let each of us go his own way.

Whether that warning was behind the sending of its negotiating team to Amman on Wednesday is besides the point. What has apparently inspired is a comprehensive agreement between the two sides on most of the issues facing their negotiations with Israel and a determination to hold more frequent coordination talks between them.

Now that the two sides have settled the dispute, people in Jordan and the occupied territories can focus their efforts on the means of strengthening peace prospects. Meanwhile, the two sides need to keep the momentum and work together for the good of their peoples.

PALESTINE PRESS COMMENTARIES

An Arabic daily Thursday echoed His Majesty King Hussein's words two days ago that there will be no separate Jordan-Israeli peace and that the peace being sought by the two should be comprehensive and just and acceptable for future generations. The King's words included in a speech to the Public Security and Civil Defence requires more and more reading because, in it, the King has clarified the true Jordanian position and firm stand vis-a-vis the peace process and the negotiations, said the daily. Furthermore, the King made it clear that there can be no separation between Jordan and Palestine because this will affect the people on both sides of the River Jordan to Jordan. Since the Palestinians have established their free state in their own soil, added the paper. It said that though Jordan has to provide support to the PLO, the Kingdom wants more directly if the PLO leadership is truly representing the entire people and if the PLO maintains its credibility in line with the Kingdom, the King is keen to maintaining a bold and firm coordination between the Jordanians and the Palestinians, and does not want to see any more procrastination and delays in King's decisions in this respect, the paper said. On the whole, the King's speech has placed matters in its own perspective, emphasising that the Kingdom is destined never to compromise the national soil.

THE Palestinians and the Jordanians are watching with some hope to get good results from the bilateral talks that started between them in Amman Wednesday as the two cling to their unity and their common goals, said Al Jadid. The meetings in Amman constitute one more in a chain of efforts to attain coordination at all levels in a cooperation that would boost the nation's efforts in regaining Arab rights, the paper noted. There is no doubt that the two sides are holding talks in good faith and in a hard spirit as they both face the looming challenges and as the developments in the region and the events are making for a unclear future, continued the daily. It should be seen in the paper, that there can be no real coordination among the countries involved in the peace process unless Jordanians and Palestinians reach genuine coordination first.

The Week in Print

Jordanian-Palestinian coordination is only solution to reaching peace

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

The local Arabic papers last week gave prominent coverage to the ongoing Jordanian-Palestinian talks on coordination of efforts regarding the peace process and their own future relationship. The press also discussed the Middle East peace, Arab affairs and a host of domestic issues.

Under the title: "Let this be the last of the crises between the two sides", a columnist in Al Dustour said that all the eyes are turned to Amman now to watch for good results coming out of the continuing Jordanian-Palestinian meetings.

Everyone concerned about the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship is waiting to see the results of talks which aim at coordinating the two sides' positions in the coming round of peace talks and also to pave the ground for sound and fruitful relationships in the coming stage, said Tamer Al Udwani.

Success of these talks, said the writer, means failure of Israel's attempts to split the united people and failure to achieve its own policy of dealing separately with Arab states in order to impose its hegemony on them.

Commenting on the ongoing talks, Sultan Al Hattab from Al Ra'i said that only the people on the two sides of the River Jordan can decide the future formula of union between the Jordanians and the Palestinians.

Sultan Al Hattab said that King Hussein in his speech in the past week had demanded that no Jordanian or Palestinian ought to talk about such a development until the land has been liberated and the usurped territories returned to their lawful owners, thus putting an end to speculation about the confederation.

Tamer Masa'weh, a columnist in Al Ra'i, said that

Oslo deal was an optimistic sign for a good beginning of Israeli withdrawals from occupied Arab land, starting early in 1994, but all these hopes have not been fulfilled to date, added the writer.

Of course, he said, nothing was achieved since the Israelis are holding on to their intransigent positions and it seems that after all the efforts no one, including Washington, is able to exercise pressure on Israel to honour its pledges, said the writer. Only a miracle, he added, can break the deadlock now.

Tamer Masa'weh commented on a visit by Qatar's foreign minister to Jordan last week by quoting him as saying that the sanctions on Iraq should end and that Arab differences should vanish.

The columnist, who writes in Al Ra'i said that calls for pan-Arab solidarity have been coming not only from Qatar but also from Oman and other states in the region, reflecting the feelings of the Arab masses.

The two Gulf states are spearheading efforts in the Gulf region to end the plight of the Iraqi people, a step which is ought to be taken by the other Arab countries, he said.

Indeed, it is more reasonable and honourable for the Arabs to end the sanctions on Iraq before the other world countries can take the steps in this direction, added the writer.

It was Prince Hassan who opened the way for the Qatari minister's visit to Jordan to break the ice in relations with the Gulf states, said Mohammad Kawash in Al Dustour.

He said that Arab states' differences, caused by the Gulf crisis, should be transcended in the interest of the Arab Nation.

He had thought that 1993 was the year of peace for the Middle East region, but we have entered the new year with no signs of it being on its way, said Mohammad Kawash in Al Dustour.

The writer said that the local authorities in Zarqa are



M. KAHIL

now chasing away the street vendors because their stalls are allegedly obstructing traffic and serving as a black market.

But these vendors have been seeing this kind of trade for years and this is the only means of earning a decent living for their families, he said.

The solution to this problem lies in creating an open air market for the vendors in the Zarqa region, which the authorities have promised to do, the writer said. He expressed hope that the problem would end soon.

A columnist in Sawt Al Shaab daily wondered when the Amman-Jerash road and the Amman-Med Sea road would be completed, after years since the start of this job. Nazih Qousi said the public has been promised over and over again that the roads would be completed soon, but the deadline was overlooked every time.

These two roads are essential for promoting tourism in Jordan and we demand that they be finished as soon as possible, said the writer. He said that the Ministry of Public Works is responsible to see to it that the work is completed according to the term of the contract and in the public interest.

A columnist in Al Dustour raised the question of dual decisions by successive governments: referring in particular to a specific project in Aqaba. Ahmad Shaker said that under the previous government the decision was taken to set up tourist facilities along the southern coast of Aqaba and a local firm had been awarded a contract and started work, only to be stopped by the present government last month.

The writer questioned the wisdom behind the order to halt the project in which the local company has invested a fortune and which, when completed, would earn the Kingdom a fortune from the tourist business.

LETTERS

Empty symbols

To the Editor:

The banana republic is an old phenomenon in the relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries. This phenomenon is actually the backbone of neo-colonialism, whereby the economic interests of foreign corporations are preserved and promoted in an ex-colony by a strong paramilitary force. These banana republics possess only the trappings and symbols of independence; a flag, a president, a big police force.

Latin America was at one point a bunch of banana republics whose resources, which were primarily agricultural, were usurped by corporations like the United Fruit Company, which essentially became the decision makers in Latin America after formal colonialism ended at the turn of the century. This was no blessing for the people of Latin America nor for the continent itself. Neo-colonialism and banana republics are in fact the direct cause of poverty, incurable environmental catastrophes, the non-existence of basic human rights, and severe underdevelopment of the continent.

Again, it is important to emphasise that banana republics have been around for almost one hundred years. It is clear that the transition from colonised entity to banana republic is not beneficial for the indigenous population.

Thus, it is alarming that the Palestinian people could be subjected to a legal status even less than that of a banana republic; a banana self-autonomous region. This banana self-autonomous region actually has no defined borders, it is physically disjointed, it has few natural resources, the most significant being small banana and citrus groves owned mostly by wealthy Jerusalame families, and it contains the most densely populated and one of the most polluted areas on earth, which, according to Edward Said, makes Soweto look like a resort town.

Have the Palestinians become so obsessed by symbols that they have forgotten what these symbols ought to represent: raising a flag, holding paramilitary parades, having a president? What value do these symbols have to a banana self-autonomous region? Will these symbols bring about the development of the physically disjointed areas? Will they exercise their basic human rights and enjoy basic civil liberties?

It is not symbols that last, but what these symbols stand for. Do they not stand for symbols which stand for nothing?

Zeld Zalatimo,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Expression and creativity An old idea is gathering new scientific support

By Natalie Angier

NEW YORK — As long as there have been poets to pierce the darkness with their diamond songs, and painters to capture rays of sun shattering on cool cathedral stone, and artists of all persuasions to consort with the gods and articulate the union, there have been social critics to notice that an awful lot of these creative people are mentally unsound. "Why is it," Aristotle asked in the fourth century B.C., "that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry or the arts are melancholic?"

Three hundreds years ago, the English poet John Dryden wrote: "Great wits are sure to madness near allied / And thin partitions do their bounds divide," a sweet couplet that has since degenerated into the sorry cliché. "There is a thin line between genius and madness."

Yet as with any cliché worth the iteration, this one has a sizable grain of truth in it. After many decades of quarreling over how to define slippery and often subjective terms like "madness" and "creativity," psychiatrists, neurologists and evolutionary geneticists at last have accrued powerful evidence that the link between certain mental disorders and artistic achievement is real. Study after study has shown that people in the arts suffer disproportionately high rates of mood disorders, particularly manic depression and major depression.

Those with manic depression, or bipolar disorder, oscillate between summit and abyss — between a sense of grandeur and recklessness, a boundless, crackabout energy that feasts on itself and disdains the need for sleep; and a profound depression in which anguish, lethargy and self-hatred dominate. Many of the most eminent creators seem to have

had full-blown manic depression, others have had milder forms of the disorder and still others have suffered repeated episodes of major depression, the same bleakness seen in the downswing of manic depression but without its euphoric counterpart.

As Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison points out in her recent book, *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, the list of artists in whom manic depression or severe depression has been diagnosed with confidence is a pantheon, of

glory: Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Herman Melville, Robert Schumann, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Lowell and Theodore Roethke, to name but a very few.

"Most of the best studies in this area have only been done in the last few years," Dr. Jamison, a professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, said in an interview. "People think this whole area of research is very squishy, very puffy and unsubstantiated. They don't

realise how solid and consistent the work really is." Psychiatrists have found that among distinguished artists, the rates of manic depression and major depression are 10 to 30 times as prevalent as in the population at large.

Importantly, the periods of either mania or depression are interrupted by long stretches of normality in which the artist appears in command of their work.

"People have a problem with the idea that someone can be both very healthy and very ill," Dr. Jamison said. "But those with manic depression can be very scared and extremely confident at the same time. And it takes that hyperconfidence when you're breaking down borders in art and doing things that haven't been done before."

Some scientists suggest that because manic-depressive patients are ever riding the biochemical express between emotional extremes, their brains end up more persistently plastic than do the brains of less mercurial sorts. That heightened interconnectedness between one neural neighbourhood and the next, as well as an ongoing receptivity to new information, may allow a person with a mood disorder to synthesise seemingly incongruous thoughts and to reimagine the ordinary into the extraordinary — the essence of artistic creation.

Although creativity is obviously an essential element in many professions, the link between creativity and mental instability is more pronounced in the arts than in other fields. For example, Dr. Arnold M. Ludwig, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Kentucky Medical Centre in Lexington and author of a forthcoming book, *The Price of Greatness*, looked at the incidence of psychiatric illness among 1,004 eminent men and women.

Considering individuals in eight creative-arts professions and 10 other professions, of the stature of Aldous Huxley, Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Einstein and Henri Matisse, Dr. Ludwig discovered that psychiatric disturbances were far more common among the artists than among the others. For example, the rate of alcoholism was 60 per cent among actors and 41 per cent among novelists, but only 3 per cent among those in the physical sciences and 10 per cent among military officers. In the case of manic depression,

17 per cent of the actors and 13 per cent of the poets were thought to have had the disorder, while those in the sciences were believed to have suffered from it at a rate of less than 1 per cent, comparable to the incidence in the general population.

Observing the striking concordance between emotional volatility and creativity, some researchers are now seeking to understand the neurobiological basis of both mental instability and inspiration, and to learn how a mood disorder may nourish or sharpen creative thinking.

"If this were simply an erroneous, random mutation, you'd expect to see maybe 1 in 3,000 people with the disorder," said Dr. Daniel Willson, who divides his time be-

tween practising clinical psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and studying anthropology at Cambridge University in England. "Instead, the incidence is at least 1 in 100 or even higher, whether you're looking at people in New York City or the Kalahari Desert. So you're talking about a gene system that is 30, even 100 times more common than it ought to be —" New York Times.

Epilepsy's impact on artistry

APART FROM mood disorders, other disturbances of the brain have been associated with artistic creation, in particular temporal lobe epilepsy. In this disease, the temporal lobes on the sides of the brain, where memory and feelings reside, are intermittently seized by chaotic storms of electrical hyperactivity.

Although the seizures may be undetectable to observers, they can prompt symptoms like hallucinations, powerful religious sensations, fury, fear, joy and — a blessing for those in the arts — an unquenchable desire to write or draw, a desire that persists even after the seizure is over.

Seizures are different physiological events from episodes of mania or depression, but they can exert on an artist a similar sense of grandeur and mastery.

Thom Jones, whose recent collection of short stories, "The Fuglist at Rest" (1993), is a finalist for the National Book Award, said his temporal lobe epilepsy, which he traces to a brain injury suffered while boxing, profoundly defines his personality and his work.

"Before my injury, I wasn't inclined to be a reader, or obsessed with God and the meaning of life," he said. "Ever since this happened to me, I've been a more introspective guy, constantly reading philosophy, studying world religions and then having a fever, literally a fever, to write."

"It's a lust, an obsession, to put it down, and in the act of writing I'm not Thom Jones. And it's such a relief to not be Thom Jones."

Some famous, and famously mad, creators may have suffered from both temporal lobe epilepsy and manic depression, including Edgar Allan Poe and Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh's blend of mental agony and creative passion was so profound that despair finally drove him at the age of 37 to shoot himself in the chest, and died of his wound two days later.

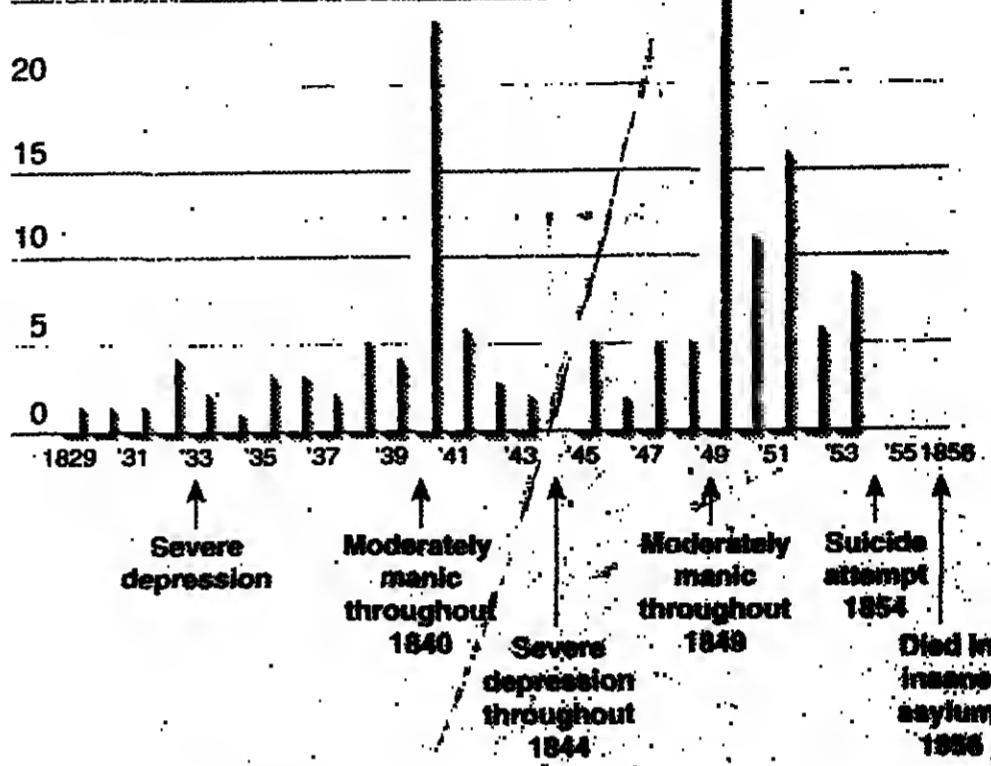
Some researchers are looking at the problem from an

evolutionary angle, arguing that manic depression is not a disease but a trait, a fairly common genetic variation on a temperamental theme that in prehistoric times conferred strong advantages to those who inherited it. From family and twin studies, researchers have concluded that a predisposition to manic depression is strongly inherited (although recent attempts to isolate a gene have proved fruitless). Given the

Mapping Madness and Genius

The quantity, if not the quality, of the composer Robert Schumann's output varied strikingly with episodes of depression or mania and the relatively benign periods between. He lived from 1810 to 1856, when he died of self-starvation.

25 compositions



Mexico revolt: Reminder of region's other rebels

By Andrew Cawthorne
Reuter

PANAMA CITY — Mexico's peasant uprising is a reminder that, while the bloody wars characterising Central America in the 1970s and 1980s are over, smaller-scale rebel activity still smoulders throughout the region.

From the poor state of Chiapas in the Mexico-Guatemala border where Indians launched their new year's day insurrection, to the jungle regions of southeastern Panama controlled by Colombian guerrillas, armed revolutionary bands are a persistent annoyance if not a serious threat to Central America's elected rulers.

One PLO official said that Mr. Kaddoumi came to Amman authorised by the PLO's Executive Committee to reach accords with Jordan, but was trying to win time because Mr. Arafat's wish was to wait until the PLO-Israeli negotiations on withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho were finalised.

Jordanian officials, angered by what they saw as the PLO's lack of seriousness, pushed for signing the accord.

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Mr. Arafat was in direct contact with Mr. Kaddoumi and the Jordanians, directing his delegation and requesting amendments which led to his approval for signing the agreement, officials said.

Dr. Anani told reporters that King Hussein's directives and his insistence on continuous and practical coordination were welcomed by the organisation.

"We think the pact is ready for implementation, and we have big challenges ahead of us, we are pleased with the achievement of this economic accord and with the fact that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was in direct consultation with us during the meetings until late hours in the night," Dr. Anani said.

He added that the question of guarantees whether the agreement would be honoured was not a "valid question. There are no such things as guarantees because we emanated from our deep conviction that our interests are interrelated and must be coordinated and streamlined and we did not adopt anything that was not in line with the interests of both Palestinian and Jordanian people."

Mr. Arafat said the only guarantees for implementing the pact "is the fact that we have no other alternative."

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He added that the question of guarantees whether the agreement would be honoured was not a "valid question. There are no such things as guarantees because we emanated from our deep conviction that our interests are interrelated and must be coordinated and streamlined and we did not adopt anything that was not in line with the interests of both Palestinian and Jordanian people."

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World News

Communists and nationalists forming block against reformists — Gaidar

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Economics Minister Yegor Gaidar said nationalists and Communists in Russia's new parliament appeared to be forging a common front against reformists, five days before the legislature's first session.

Mr. Gaidar told Echo Moskovy Radio station Thursday night his Russia's Choice bloc, the main reformist grouping in the new State Duma, was pulling out of all-party consultations on the appointment of a speaker.

"In the course of these negotiations, especially in recent days, we have seen the clear emergence of a close coalition of (nationalist) Liberal Democrats, Communists and Agrarians (who are) ... imposing their decisions," Mr. Gaidar said.

"We do not want to take part in this," he added.

The prospect of a joint front formed by nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democrats, Communists and conservative Agrarians has haunted President Boris Yeltsin since Dec. 11 elections.

Mr. Yeltsin had gambled that the new State Duma would prove more sympathetic to his market reforms than the old parliament he abolished on Sept. 21. But the elections showed heavy support for ultra-nationalist Zhirinovsky and the Communists.

Seoul sees no quick end to nuclear FROW

SEOUL (R) — North Korea's willingness to allow nuclear inspection could prove a turning point in efforts to end a long-standing dispute over its suspected atomic arms programme, South Korean officials said.

But doubts persist in Seoul whether the reclusive Communist state will move quickly to remove suspicions over its programme and return to the negotiating table with South Korea to promote peace on the divided Korean peninsula.

"The North's agreement to allow nuclear inspections is a promising sign that a peaceful solution of the thorny issue may be possible," said Cho Myung-Jae, a Foreign Ministry official.

"But it is just one of many steps; the North must take to completely resolve the nuclear issue... and we should not be overly optimistic," said Mr. Cho.

"The North is so unpredictable and it is really difficult to say the nuclear row will be settled fairly soon," he added.

If efforts to persuade the North to allay fears about its suspected development of an atomic arsenal fail, it could be slapped with international sanctions, U.S. and South Korean officials have said.

This could further increase tensions on the peninsula, site of the world's last cold war frontier, where the United States, China, Russia, and Japan all have strategic long-term interests.

A North Korea watcher in Seoul said the North may resort to delaying tactics in future negotiations with the United States, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and South Korea in a ploy to continue a bombing programme.

"It is premature to say a deal (between North Korea and United States) over nuclear row," he said.

Undersecretary of State Lynn Davis, briefing reporters at the State Department, said Wednesday the North had agreed in negotiations with the United States to allow inspections of seven declared nuclear sites.

The comments by Mr. Davis, the department's top policymaker on non-proliferation matters, were the first on-the-record confirmation from the United States of any agreement.

But the accord sidesteps a more crucial matter — IAEA access to undeclared sites, especially two nuclear waste dumps that could shed crucial light on whether North Korea has produced nuclear weapons.

In Tokyo, Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and U.S. Senator Sam Nunn agreed Friday that Tokyo and Washington should both cooperate with Seoul to address North Korea's suspected development of nuclear arms, officials said.

Mr. Gaidar's bloc and other broadly pro-Yeltsin groups, driven by personal rivalries and policy differences, could have serious trouble winning a majority on key legislation.

But Mr. Yeltsin still has cause to hope that enough divides the Communists and ultra-nationalists to prevent them forming a solid anti-government coalition.

His aides are busily courting Communist leaders — something unthinkable before December's elections.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, not allied to any of the blocs, met Communist Party leaders Thursday.

Friday saw a relative lull in political activity, being the Russian Orthodox Christmas Day and a national holiday.

The Duma speaker, subject of this week's consultations, has more limited powers than the head of the old parliament, Russian Khasbulatov, who is in for his part in an Oct. 3 uprising against Mr. Yeltsin.

But Mr. Gaidar was clearly concerned about early signs of cooperation.

"We have much work to do to achieve the formation of a coalition strong enough to prevent the Duma becoming an instrument for the destruction of democracy," Mr. Gaidar said.

The Duma and the Federation Council, parliament's upper

chamber, are scheduled to hold their first sitting Tuesday.

Mr. Yeltsin may address deputies of the two chambers before the sittings in an informal joint assembly.

The president's chief spokesman struck an ominous note in comments Thursday when he said opponents should cooperate with reformers or face a harsh reaction from Mr. Yeltsin.

"We know from the events of Oct. 3 and 4 that the hand of the president can be tough and strong," spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov said.

Most Moscow residents apparently don't think Mr. Zhirinovsky should hold real power. More than 71 per cent said they would not want him to become prime minister.

Mr. Zhirinovsky's inflammatory rhetoric frightens some Russians, but delights or amuses others. In a vintage performance Thursday, he called American President Bill Clinton a "coward" and said the U.S. president should stay home and play the saxophone instead of coming to Moscow for a summit meeting.

Mr. Zhirinovsky also threatened Japan with a blockade, said French and German leaders have been "sucking up" to Mr. Yeltsin, and called the West "rotten and moldy."

U.S. officials have said Mr. Clinton will not meet with Mr. Zhirinovsky during the Jan. 12-15 summit.

protesting the painful economic policies — and colourless campaigns of President Yeltsin's supporters.

The poll released Friday by the Mnemonic (Opinion) Research Service lends support to the protest vote theory.

Two-thirds of the 1,223 Moscow residents questioned by telephone last week said they did not believe Mr. Zhirinovsky could fulfill his promises. Just 10 per cent said they thought he could, and 23 per cent weren't sure.

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A man lifts the blanket covering the 13-year-old boy killed by police gunfire in a Cape Town township (AFP photo)

PAC to meet police over Cape Town killing

CAPE TOWN (R) — South Africa's Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) Friday condemned the killing of a 13-year-old boy in violence triggered by the arrests of suspects to last week's Cape Town pub killing.

Anglican Archbishop and Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu angrily condemned the shooting and said in a statement police were going out of their way to harass the PAC.

The boy, Siphiwo Sam, was killed and six people including a six-year-old child were wounded when members of the police Murder and Robbery Squad fired rubber bullets and shotgun shells in Cape Town's Guguletu township late Thursday.

Police Colonel Raymond Dowd said police felt compelled to fire rubber bullets and shotgun shells when they came under attack from youths throwing rocks and chanting "war, war."

PAC executive member Patricia De Lille told reporters about 50 armed police raided a PAC election meeting, detained nine youths and allowed a police dog to bite people in a crowd angered by the arrests.

The government urged people to stay at home and the sandy streets of the seafront capital were empty.

Troops made house-to-house searches for the remnants of a force of more than 100 armed men the government said a crossed from Ghana Wednesday night to assassinate military President Gnassingbe Eyadema.

The government said at least 40 people had been killed. There was no word of casualties from Thursday night's clashes.

Regional carrier Air Afrique said it had cancelled all flights to Lome. The airport was not officially closed but there was no traffic and workers stayed home.

A police statement broadcast by radio Lome said private cars were banned. Only security forces, emergency services, diplomats and journalists were allowed to travel and they would have to submit to inspections at roadblocks.

"Courage, courage and more courage, that's what we wish you this morning," said a Radio Lome announcer.

Sting, Billy Joel lead list of Grammy nominees

NEW YORK (R) — Mainstream recording stars Sting and Billy Joel led the pack in Grammy Award nominations, with each garnering nominations for album, record and song of the year.

Sting earned a total of six nominations and Joel, with four.

The 36th annual awards ceremony by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences will be held at New York's Radio City Music Hall on March 1.

Sting and Joel led an eclectic list of nominees for major awards that included Neil Young, R.E.M., Meat Loaf, the theme from Aladdin, and Whitney Houston's theme album to The Bodyguard in the music industry's most prestigious awards.

Sting was also nominated for Best Music Video — Long Form, Best Male Pop Vocal Performance and Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance Categories, competing with Joel in the Pop Vocal Performance category.

Janet Jackson earned nominations for Best Rhythm and Blues Song and Best Female Rhythm and Blues Vocal Performance. Her

Bushfires hit suburban Sydney

SYDNEY (AFP) — Suburban homes blazed and residents tried to flee through choked streets Friday after bushfires which have devastated New South Wales raged into Sydney, the first time in living memory that such an inferno has licked the city.

Four homes in the northern suburb of Roseville were reported to have "exploded," many more there and in neighbouring suburbs fringing the bush were burning and thousands had been evacuated in the swirling firestorm.

No deaths were reported, but ambulance services said 14 people, including a number of firefighters, had been taken to hospital to be treated for smoke inhalation, dehydration and exhaustion.

A college at nearby Kurrajong was in fire, a shopping centre in the suburb of Marsfield 16 kilometres from the city centre was reportedly under threat and the Blue Mountains to the west were blazing.

An enormous cloud of smoke reduced visibility virtually to zero through much of Sydney's north shore, which includes some of its most exclusive suburbs, and traffic was almost at a standstill.

Major roads and northern train services were cut and power supplies were interrupted as fires tore at the city's main arteries.

Weeping residents clung to valued possessions — such as television sets and bicycles — as they fled their homes, but there were no reports of serious casualties by 8 p.m. (2100 GMT).

But exhausted bush fire fighters were still battling Friday night to save thousands of homes here after winds combined with a heatwave to create the disaster.

With temperatures touching 38 degrees Celsius (100 Fahrenheit) in the city and up to 44 C (111F) in the country, the state government warned up to 3,000 homes could be lost within three days if weather conditions did not change.

"We demand that Colonel (Leonard) Knipe, Major (Des) Segal and Colonel Dowd must be removed from the investigation of the Heidelberg incident," he said.

Arch. Tutu said in his statement police had a right and a duty to investigate "racist crimes such as the Heidelberg massacre."

"All the people were shot in the back as they ran away from police. I don't hear any warning. I just heard shots being fired," she said.

Ms. De Lille said at a news conference later that leaders of

her radical black-supremacist group would meet local police chief General Nic Snyman later in the day to inform him of plans to lay a charge of murder against police.

Col. Dowd confirmed that Sam was shot in the back, but said the raid was part of an investigation into terror attacks in Cape Town last year on a restaurant, a church and a pub, confirmed that Sam was shot in the back.

He said it would be premature to assume that Sam was shot by police during a clash with a crowd protesting the detention of people wanted for questioning in connection with last week's slaughter of three women and a man in the Heidelberg Tavern, a popular student pub.

PAC spokesman Andu Niso said lawyers were preparing charges against police.

"We demand that Colonel (Leonard) Knipe, Major (Des) Segal and Colonel Dowd must be removed from the investigation of the Heidelberg incident," he said.

By mid-afternoon, a 7,000-strong force of firefighters — the entire strength of the New South Wales Volunteer Force, with reinforcements from neighbouring states and defence force personnel — were battling 130 major fires raging out of control throughout the state.

Aristocrats are blamed for causing most of the fires, which have already claimed three lives amid a trail of devastation.

Firemen had no hope of controlling the fires and could do little more than try to save lives and property, Bush Fire Service spokesman Danny Moroney said.

The disaster in the northern suburbs occurred after a major fire in the state's central coast region crossed the Hawkesbury River system north of Sydney and raced here.

It linked up with another fire in Sydney's Lane Cove National Park which started Thursday and flared again Friday, forcing evacuation of several streets in Marsfield and threatening others in Pymble and Turramurra.

At Sting's label, AM Records, Executive Vice President Wayne Isaac said he was surprised at the range of musical styles that surfaced for his Ten Summoner's Tales.

"I think in general, the Grammys have never been the most cutting edge reflection of what's happening in the music business," he said.

Nominations for Best Song Of The Year, given to the songwriter, were Sting for If I Ever Lose My Faith In You, Neil Young's Harvest Moon and I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That), performed by Meat Loaf and written by Jim Steinman and the theme from the movie Aladdin, A Whole New World, written by Alan Menken and Tim Rice.

For Record of the Year, which is for singles, the nominees were A Whole New World from Aladdin, Joel's The River Of Dreams, Sting's If I Ever Lose My Faith In You, Neil Young's Harvest Moon and Houston's I Will Always Love You.

It's an incredibly diverse marketplace," another record-

industry executive said.

Hollywood madam names some names

NEW YORK (AFP) — Hollywood Madam Heidi Fleiss named actor Charlie Sheen and producer Jon Peters as free-spending clients and said TV actress Shannen Doherty once tried to hire prostitutes for a fiance's bachelor party. Sheen liked to have a blonde dress up as a cheerleader and pretend she had a big game the next day. Fleiss told Vanity Fair, adding that the actor was a gentleman who liked to hire call girls whenever he had his friends over. "He'd pay for all his friends," she said. "They want to be studs. They don't want to say they pay for sex."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. protests to Israel over shooting

TYRE (AFP) — Israeli-backed militiamen opened fire at two tanks manned by Finnish peacekeepers in South Lebanon without causing casualties, a U.N. officer here said Friday. He told AFP that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) protested to Israel over Thursday's incident, which he said involved militiamen of the Israeli-trained and financed South Lebanon Army (SLA). The tanks were crossing the Hamra bridge, in the western sector of Israel's "security zone," on their way to UNIFIL in Naqura, south of Tyre. As tank gunshots were fired in their direction, the officer said, Israel told UNIFIL that the SLA forces were aiming at three unidentified commandos in the region, he said.

Polish ex-CIA agent in Israel arrested

WARSAW (AFP) — A Polish ex-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent in Israel and friend of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin was arrested here Thursday and charged with armed robbery and illegal arms possession, judicial officials said Friday. Andrzej Kielczynski, believed to be the head of a criminal gang, carried out a number of armed robberies throughout Poland with his nephew Albert Kielczynski after his return from Israel in April 1992, according to the newspaper Express Wroclaw. Mr. Kielczynski left Poland for Israel in 1958, where he became a friend and close associate of the country's future Prime Minister Menachem Begin. In the 1970s, he reportedly participated in a number of attacks in Israel, notably against the Germany embassy, the Goethe Institute and the Lufthansa airline headquarters in Tel Aviv. Kielczynski, who had links to leading Israeli politicians, was then recruited by the CIA, to whom he provided information on government policy and the location of nuclear weapons sites in the 1980s, the newspaper reported.

Cholesterol testing said unreliable

LONDON (AFP) — Cholesterol levels are not sufficiently reliable in predicting heart disease, according to research published here Friday. The 12-year study of 21,500 men, 220 of whom died of heart disease during the research period, showed up to three-quarters of heart deaths would not be predicted by cholesterol screening alone. Only 20 per cent of those who died during the study were in the group that tested among the 10 per cent highest cholesterol group, the study showed.

Briton who kidnapped son jailed

LONDON (AFP) — Peter Malkin, the British businessman who kidnapped his 12-year-old son in France and took refuge with him in Egypt for two months was sentenced to 18 months in prison by the high court here Friday. Mr. Malkin, 54, was arrested Thursday as he stepped off a plane at Heathrow airport, accompanied by his son Oliver and his friend, Andrew Donnelly. Oliver was immediately taken away from Mr. Malkin and returned by plane to France, where he was reunited with his mother, Elise Pridmore, 36, who has legal custody of the child.

Mass funeral for 850 Iranian soldiers

TEHRAN (AFP) — President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani attended a mass funeral Friday for 850 Iranian soldiers killed in the 1980-1988 war with Iraq and whose remains were found recently, officials said. Each of the coffins was draped with an Iranian flag at the ceremony which followed Friday prayers at Tehran University, officials said. The soldiers' remains were found by volunteers and members of a committee in charge of conducting a search for missing-in-action.

U.S. commandos in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A contingent of 150 U.S. army commandos has arrived here to participate in joint military exercises with their elite Pakistani counterparts, officials said here Friday. The U.S. Special Forces troops and the Special Services group of the Pakistani army will take part in war games in the mountainous regions of North West Frontier Province, they said.

Nigerian ruler relocates to inland

ABUJA (R) — Military ruler General Sani Abacha, who seized power in November moved his government to Nigeria's inland capital Abuja Friday, an official spokesman said. Mr. Abacha and senior members of his government arrived around noon in Abuja where all government business would now be conducted, he said. Mr. Abacha had been operating from Lagos since Nov. 17, when he became head of state following the sudden resignation of former interim civilian leader Ernest Shonekan.

UAE bans meat for containing pork

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has banned Dutch Zwan canned beef after tests showed it contained pork, which is prohibited by Islam, a municipal official told Friday's newspapers here. Existing stocks of all Zwan products, among the most popular meat products in the Gulf, have been withdrawn and destroyed, said Abdulla Latif Fadi, director of Sharjah Municipality. The problem was discovered last month when health inspectors in Ajman found Zwan cans carrying the words "slaughtered according to Islamic Law" on one side and "pork" on the other. Tests have shown all Zwan products were laced with pork. A decision has been taken to withdraw all stocks from the UAE and destroy them, he said.

Bombs found outside New York building

NEW YORK (AP) — Whoever left homemade bombs outside two New York buildings along with notes criticising the Israeli government may have intended to scare people but not actually cause damage, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly says. The fact that the bombs were set in the predawn hours Wednesday when the office buildings were empty, and that the devices were not powerful or well-designed, suggests "they may have been left just as a message," Mr. Kelly said. A group that is housed in one of the buildings, Americans for Peace Now, issued a statement condemning the abortive bombings and promising to redouble its efforts for peace. The bombs, both crude devices made of thermos bottles and egg timers, were safely disposed of by the police bomb squad. But no one claimed responsibility, and those who set them remained a mystery.

Blizzards, storms lash Western Europe

LONDON (R) — Blizzards, high winds and torrential rain lashed Western Europe Thursday and Friday, disrupting travel and forcing dozens of people to flee their homes. One man died in London after driving his car into a canal in an overnight snowstorm while in the southern French Alps over 100 people were evacuated as relentless rain caused flooding. In Portugal, high winds whipped the Atlantic into waves of up to five metres, closing many ports and forcing the crew of an Italian gas carrier to abandon ship in the Straits of Gibraltar. All 17 crew were rescued but officials said the ship, which was abandoned when water flooded into the engine room, may well have sunk. Snow fell as far south as Andalusia in Spain and the Algarve in Portugal, avalanches closed roads in the Italian Alps and there were warnings of snowslides in the Pyrenees in northeast Spain. In southern and central England, rescue workers evacuated dozens of people from water-logged homes, after weeks of almost continuous rain.

Woerner warns Russia cooperation is not one-sided

BRUSSELS (Agencies) — North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Manfred Woerner warned Russia on Friday that cooperation with the alliance depended on Moscow's full respect for human rights and the sovereignty of neighbouring states.

"Cooperation is a two-way street," Mr. Woerner told a group of journalists ahead of next week's NATO summit expected to define the alliance's relations with its former Soviet bloc foes.

Mr. Woerner reiterated that NATO, which has agreed to

bolster military ties with Russia, is trying to support the democratic and reform efforts of President Boris Yeltsin.

"He knows that, of course, cooperation with the West requires full respect for not only human rights domestically but

also the sovereignty and independence of neighbouring states," the NATO chief said.

Concern about Russia's

direction has heightened since the surprisingly strong showing by ultra-nationalists in last month's parliamentary elections. But NATO analysts said

there were worrying signs even before.

They cited Moscow's insistence on protecting Russian-speaking minorities abroad, its slowness in withdrawing troops from the Baltic states and its drive to become the main peacekeeper in the former

Soviet republics.

Mr. Woerner said that while

NATO wanted to cooperate with Moscow, its policy "to a

certain extent is influenced by what happens in Russia, by the substance and also by the language of those who are responsible for policymaking."

Defence chiefs of four East European countries Friday welcomed the NATO plan to

offer them closer military links, but called for assurances that it was a step towards membership of the alliance.

The defence ministers of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, and the Czech Republic's deputy defence minister, also, asked for NATO to state clearly that they can one day become members.

"The participants in the meeting attendedly discussed (NATO's) 'Partnership for Peace' initiative," they said in a statement after talks on coordinating a joint strategy before the NATO summit in Brussels.

"They believe it is a step in the right direction, favourable to the idea of multilateral security and leads to a broadening of cooperation between NATO and the states of Central Eastern Europe," they said.

Two senior East European

politicians on Friday urged speedy full NATO membership for former communist countries, implicitly expressing concern over the U.S. partnership for Peace initiative.

The comments came after a meeting with Washington's U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright and Chairman of the U.S. joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili.

Polish President Lech Wałęsa told the two U.S. envoys here that the United States should leap rather than crawl in its Eastern European policy.

"As a soldier, I know that one advances more quickly by leaping. Certainly, one can also crawl, and sometimes it is necessary. But today in Europe there is an opportunity to leap, crawling would be slower and less efficient."

Rabbani foes accept temporary ceasefire

KABUL (Agencies) — Afghanistan's combined opposition forces Friday announced a temporary ceasefire to permit the evacuation of wounded and diplomats from Kabul, but said they still sought the unconditional resignation of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

In a joint communiqué issued from Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's base in Charasiab, on the eastern outskirts of Kabul, they said Mr. Rabbani should step down and publicly announce his resignation through the media.

Heavy rain and fog over the city may also have contributed to a grounding of aircraft and the silencing of rival artillery fire.

More than 3,000 people have been treated at hospitals since the urban warfare erupted Jan. 1, and many more victims are believed trapped inside their homes. Hundreds are feared dead.

There was only sporadic fighting Friday, and thousands of residents used the lull to escape frontline neighbourhoods for safer parts of Kabul to flee the city altogether.

The statement released by Mr. Hekmatyar's representatives said the parties "are ready for cessation to hostilities."

The statement released by Mr. Hekmatyar's representatives said the SCC agreed to allow the evacuation of people wounded in the bloody six-day fight for Kabul.

It will also enable foreign diplomats to leave Kabul if they wish and help resettle war-displaced Afghans from the capital to safer places, it said.

The ceasefire proposal, urged by Pakistan, had also been accepted to supply hospitals in Kabul with medicine and arrange essential food items for the needy residents.

Neither Mr. Rabbani's party nor his main rivals have shown much interest in a permanent ceasefire.

Political sources here said the government was in contact with several tribal leaders in a bid to persuade the kidnappers to free the six, a helicopter pilot and five engineers.

They were kidnapped after flying to the Maareb area to inspect a leak at a pumping station, Hunt engineers said, adding that the helicopter was also seized.

The Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) Al Thawri newspaper reported that the oil workers were trying to defuse a bomb planted by the Khawlan on one of the company's pipelines. Hunt Oil did not confirm that report.

Company engineers told AFP that the kidnappers wanted the authorities to free a

tribesman who has been held for several weeks by Yemeni authorities in exchange for the six.

Daham tribesmen kidnapped an American diplomat, Haynes Mahoney, in November and held him for a week. It also held two American engineers from Hunt Oil for five days last May.

The Daham and Khawlan are part of the Bakil tribal group, which is generally loyal to Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh. But the Khawlan are known to support Vice-President Ali Salem Beedh's YSP.

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Troops have patrolled Sanaa since the protests erupted and shops remained shut on Thursday. Shops also closed on Friday for the local weekend.

President Saleh blamed the coalition government, headed by Haidar Abu Bakr Al Attas, for failing to solve the economic crisis.

The accusations, exchanged in letters and statements on Thursday, followed demonstrations in the capital Sanaa.

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Yemen seeks release of kidnapped oilmen amid recriminations

SANA (Agencies) — The Yemeni authorities Friday asked tribal leaders to use their influence to win the release of four Yemenis, a Canadian and a British working for the U.S. Hunt Oil firm, political sources here said.

A group from the Khawlan tribe kidnapped the six Tuesday in the Maareb region 100 kilometres east of here and are demanding the release of one of their own men in exchange, Hunt engineers said.

Earlier reports said the kidnappers were from the Daham tribe.

Political sources here said the government was in contact with several tribal leaders in a bid to persuade the kidnappers to free the six, a helicopter pilot and five engineers.

They were kidnapped after flying to the Maareb area to inspect a leak at a pumping station, Hunt engineers said, adding that the helicopter was also seized.

Several other foreigners have been abducted in recent months by tribes trying to exert pressure on the government, which is struggling to cope with serious economic and political problems.

Maareb, where the six men are believed to be held, is a mountainous region with some peaks as high as 2,000 metres. It is controlled by the heavily armed Bakil, who have for long encroached on the central government's authority.

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